

## “NĒWO YŌTINA”

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In Saskatchewan, there are three distinct Cree Dialects spoken across the province. The speakers of these dialects found here, the ‘N’, ‘Y’ and ‘TH’. Most of the Cree Speakers in Saskatchewan are predominantly Plains Cree speakers who speak in the Plains Cree Y-dialect which can be found in the Greater Plains region and South Saskatchewan. The Swampy Cree N-dialect speakers who can be found in the central and northcentral parts of Saskatchewan; and the Woods Cree/Woodland Cree TH-dialect speakers can be found in the northern part of Saskatchewan in the La Ronge and Pelican Narrows regions, south of the Northern Dene communities (S.Ratt, p.1, 2018).

In terms of ‘NĒWO YŌTINA’ which means “Four Winds”:

- ‘nēwo’ means ‘four’ which represents the four directions: North, East, South and West. NOTE: The number 4 is sacred because each community and nation may have their own interpretation and connection of what the ‘4’ represents because it could also represent other things such as the four elements, four nations, four stages of life, aspects of life, four races of people, etc.
- ‘yōtina’ means “winds” which is written in plural form; ‘yōtin’ is singular for “wind”.

NĒWO YŌTINA is written in the Plains Cree dialect ‘Y’ which can be seen in “yōtina”. The ‘Y’ can be changed to a ‘N’ if it is to be written in the Swampy Cree N-dialect which will now become as “NĒWO NŌTINA” (Wolvengrey, p. 607, 2001).

### PHONETICS:

- NĒWO (nay-wu)
- YŌTINA (you-din-na) – Plains Cree Y-dialect
- NŌTINA (nu-din-na) – Swampy Cree N-dialect

Hint: it will help the speakers pronounce the ‘T’ sound as more like a ‘d’ sound.

It is also important to take into consideration this is written in the Standard Roman Orthography (SRO) which is the common writing system currently being implemented and taught in the Saskatchewan region and some parts of the prairies. Other provinces may have their own writing systems but we use SRO because it is most common in Saskatchewan.

Another important rule to also take into consideration is that in SRO has 7 vowels: 3 short vowels and 4 long vowels: a, i, o, ā, ī, ō, ē. The ‘ē’ is always a long vowel.

- ‘a’ is pronounced like “a” in “appeal”
- ‘i’ is pronounced like “i” in “it”
- ‘o’ is pronounced like “oo” in “shook”
- ‘ā’ is pronounced like “aah”
- ‘ī’ is pronounced like “e” in “me”
- ‘ō’ is pronounced like “o” in “or”
- ‘ē’ is pronounced like “ay” in “day”

Ratt, S., & Martin, H. (2018). *Māci-nēhiyawēwin = Beginning Cree*. University of Regina Press.

Wolvengrey, A., & Ahenakew, F. (2001). *Nēhiyawēwin: itwēwina*. Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina.